Strategy for crop diversification

603. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA': Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal for encouraging farmers to diversify from traditional crops;

(b) if so, whether those crops have been identified;

(c) whether any region-wise strategy has been chalked out for this purpose; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) to (d) The Government is emphasizing crop diversification keeping in view the soil health problems being encountered by growing exhaustive crops like cereals followed by cereals. Crop diversification is also advocated so that the farmers can get remunerative prices.

The research system of ICAR as well as SAUs are carrying out research for crop diversification. A number of Pulse & Oils seed crops have been identified and released by the ICAR for diversification of cereal based cropping systems in different regions of the country. The recommendations thus made are being shared with the State Governments during National Conferences being organised by the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation well before Kharif & Rabi seasons. Besides, the ICAR is also conducting Frontline Demonstrations for the benefit of the farmers.

Benefits of Rashtriya Krishi Bima Yojana

604. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) what are the benefits of Rashtriya Krishi Bima Yojana;

(b) the number of farmers availing of this scheme;

(c) the target of Government in the next three years; and

(d) the steps being taken to spread its message so that more and more farmers are benefited?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) Rashtriya Krishi Bima Yojana (RKBY) has been introduced in the country from Rabi 1999-2000 season to provide insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers in the event of failure of any of the notified crops as a result of natural calamities, pests and diseases, to encourage the farmers to adopt progressive farming practices, high value inputs, higher technology and to stabilize farm incomes, particularly in disaster years. The scheme also help in maintaining the flow of agricultural credit.

(b) During the first three crop seasons *i.e.* Rabi 1999-2000, Kharif 2000 and Rabi 2000-01, 11068468 farmers have been covered under the scheme.

(c) On the basis of past experience, 10% increase in sum insured and premium income is expected to be achieved during the next three years.

(d) To take the message of crop insurance to the farmers and to encourage them to join the scheme, adequate publicity of the Scheme has been made through Central/State Government extension agencies and the General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC). Some of the publicity measures undertaken include:

— Distribution of posters and handbills printed in vernacular language to financial institutions and State Government agencies.

— Participation in Krishi melas/Exhibitions.

— Publicity through wall paintings and paintings on bus panels in rural areas.

— Broadcasting of jingles on All India Radio.

— Newspaper advertisements in vernacular language and advertisements in rural oriented magazines etc.

— State level workshops organized by GIC in the implementing States/UTs.

— District level/Block level awareness cum training programmes for financial institutions and other agencies in various implementing States/UTs.

Watershed programme in Maharashtra

605. SHRI SURYABHAN PATIL VAHADANE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the funds earmarked for Maharashtra during 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 under the Watershed Development Fund;

(b) the districts of Maharashtra covered by this scheme; and

(c) the achievements of Maharashtra Government in implementing Watershed Programme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE: (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) A sum of Rs. 20.00 crore has been allocated for Maharashtra state during the year 2000-2001 by the Central Steering Committee of Watershed Development Fund. An additonal allocation of 15.00 crores has been made during the year 2001-02 due to further request of Maharashtra. Therefore, a total allocation of 35.00 crores is available for utilisation over a period of 4-5 years.

(b) The Government of Maharashtra has identified the following districts under the scheme (1) Ahmedabad (2) Beed (3) Nanded (4) Nandurbar (5) Osmanabad (6) Thane (7) Wardha and (8) Yuvatmal.

(c) Under Watershed Development Fund, seven watershed projects have been sanctioned for capacity building phase to cover an area of 689 hac. at a cost of Rs. 33.51 lakhs. Besides the above, integrated Watershed Development Programme was initiated in Maharashtra state in 17,883 micro watershed from state funds since 1992, out of which 7000 micro watersheds have been completed. In addition, a total of 3245 micro watersheds under Drought Prone Areas Programme and 1687 under National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas and 270 micro watersheds under Integrated Wasteland Development Projects are being developed.